

Photos Takeout

User Guide

Version 2.6 (27 January 2023)

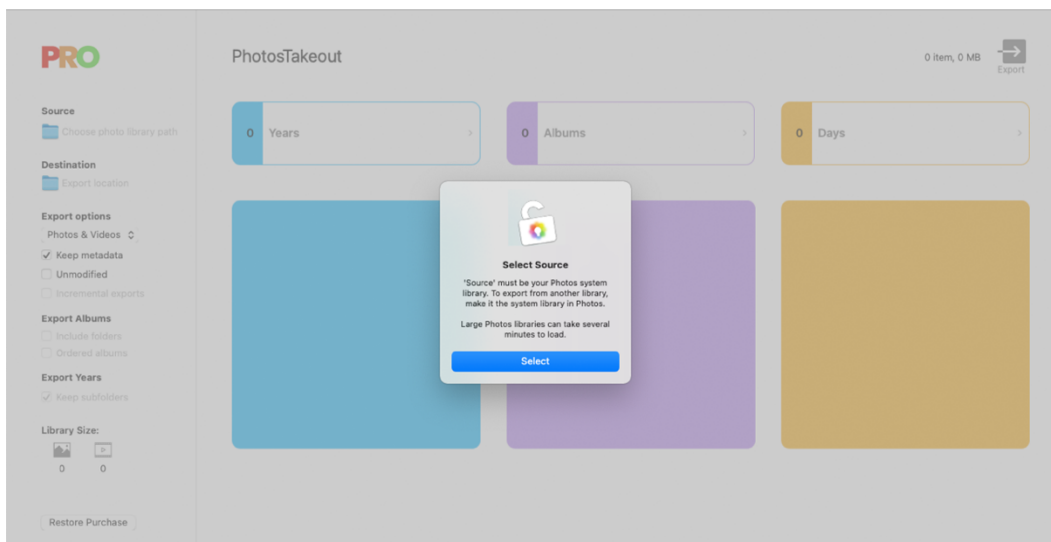
Photos Takeout exports photos and videos from the Mac Photos library in neat folders. It's easy to use: Just select years, albums or days and click Export.

Before exporting photos, ensure that:

- ❖ Photos Takeout has permission to access your photos. Go to System Preferences > Security & Privacy > 'Privacy' > Photos. Photos Takeout **must be check marked**.
- ❖ The library you plan to export from **is the current System Library** in Photos: Check in Photos > (in Monterey or older: Preferences; in Ventura: Settings) > General.
- ❖ Your Mac has **enough free** space to accommodate photos downloaded from iCloud. If you have photos in iCloud, Photos Takeout will first download and then export them.

Control Panel

On launching Photos Takeout, you'll see this screen:

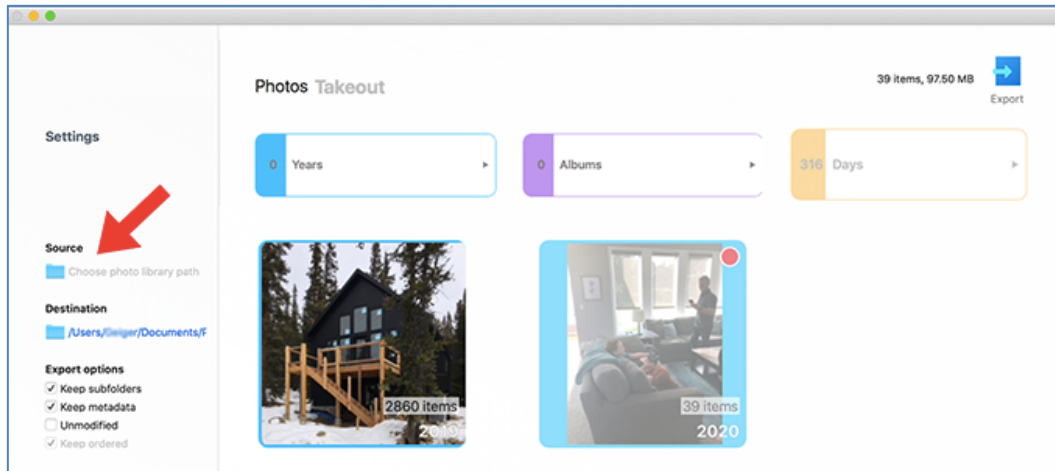


Select the **source** Photos library. In the left pane, specify the export **destination** and other parameters (See below). In the right pane, select whether to export folders by Year, Album or Moment (Day), and which years, which albums etc.

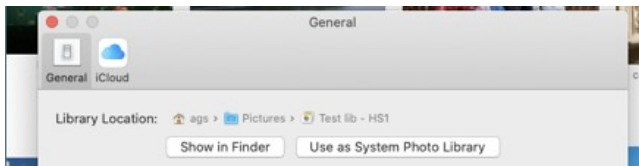
- ❖ If you see **Error: Database is locked** alert, Mac Photos may be open. Quit it. If the issue persists, see FAQ at the end of this Guide to learn how to release the lock.

Left pane

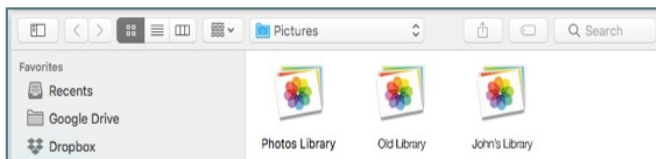
Source: This is the library from which Photos Takeout will export photos and videos. This must be the same as the current system library in Photos > Preferences > General.



In mac OS Catalina and later, **Source** must be the same as Photos' **system library**. To use another library, first set it as the system library in Photos Preferences (See in FAQ). Then, in Photos Takeout, click Source and select the same library. If source and system library aren't the same, iCloud-based, referenced and edited items will not be exported.

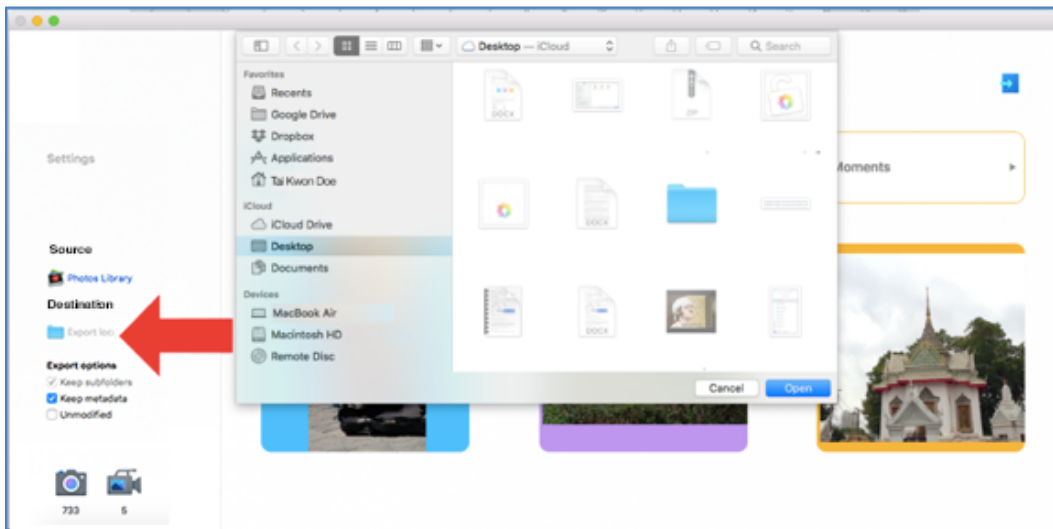


The Photos Library is usually located the Pictures folder. If you have multiple libraries, find and select the one you want to export from, then click **Open**.



- ❖ You'll need Power version for libraries of up to 50GB; Pro Power for larger ones.
- ❖ Library size shown by Photos Takeout only includes photos and videos, while Photos app also includes database, thumbnails etc. As such, the sizes may differ a bit.

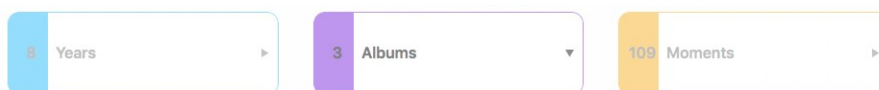
Destination: In the left pane, click below Destination and specify where you want to save the exported folders, e.g. Mac's desktop, Dropbox, Google Drive, external drive etc.



Export options: Use these to refine the selection of image assets to be exported.

- **Keep metadata:** Check marking this will embed all EXIF/IPTC metadata and titles, descriptions, keywords or locations that you have added in Photos. If you want to remove metadata for privacy or other reasons, uncheck this box.
- **Unmodified:** Leave this box unchecked to export the latest versions of photos and videos with all your edits. To export the unmodified originals, check it.
- **Keep Folders:** If the selected albums are in folders, check marking this box will export the albums along with the folder-subfolder hierarchy.
- **Keep ordered:** If the photos have been custom-arranged in an album, check mark this box to preserve the sequence. Items in the album will be renamed as album-name 000n.filetype (Feature available only in Catalina and later).
- **Keep subfolders:** When exporting Years, check this box to get monthly subfolders. They will be named 1 (for Jan), 2 (Feb) etc. For Moments, this option is greyed out. To export Albums with the folder hierarchy, use 'Keep Folders' explained above.
- **Media selector:** To choose between Photos & Videos, Photos Only, Videos only.

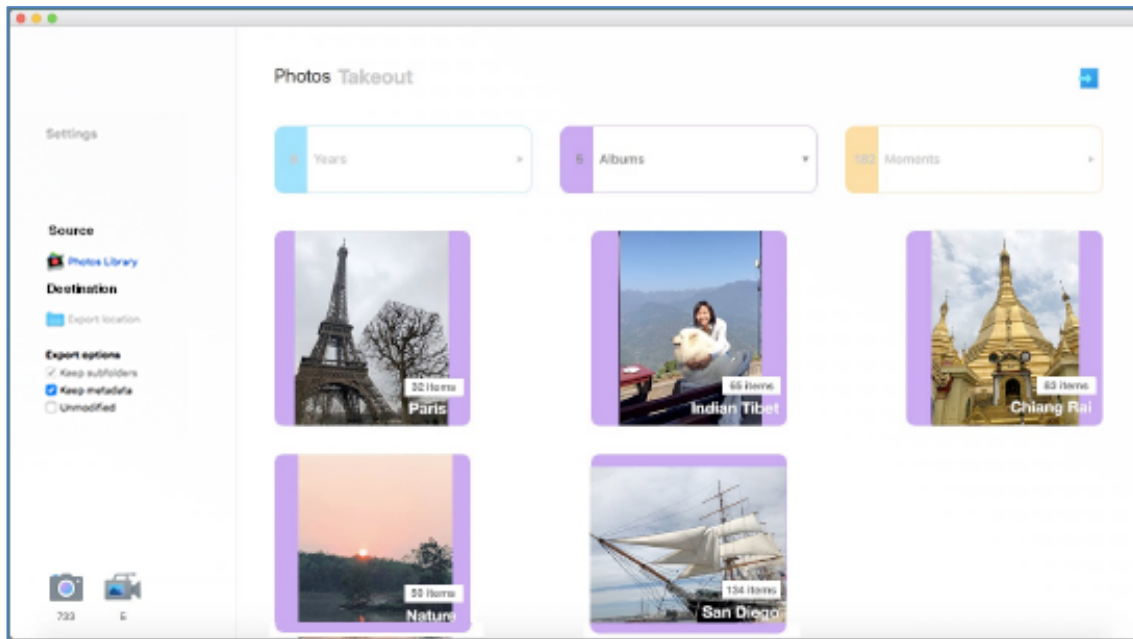
Right pane



The three buttons above show the Year, Album and Day counts.

To export all the years, all albums or all moments/dates that exist in your library, click on the relevant top-level button, and click Export.

To select specific years, albums etc., click on the relevant button. This expands the view to show the selected category's folders, and the number of items in each folder.



To select multiple non-contiguous folders, ⌘-click them. For contiguous folders, click the first folder, then hold down Shift and click the last folder in the range.

After this, click Export button on top right. A progress indicator will show % complete. If any photos aren't found or exported, it will alert you. See FAQ (Q9) for what to do.

Free Trial and Upgrading

- **Free version:** Experience how the app works. Exports only 1 photo per folder.
- **Power version:** For Photos libraries of up to 50GB in size. Unlimited exports.
- **Pro version:** For larger libraries. We have tested with libraries of up to 2.4 TB.
- **Power Up:** If you already have the Power version, the Power Up in-app purchase lets you upgrade to Pro Power version by paying just the price difference. Do not buy the Pro version separately, because then the App Store won't know to apply a discount.

FAQ and Troubleshooting

GENERAL

1. I have a 2.5 terabyte library. Will Photos Takeout be able to handle it?

Yes, there is no size limit. Use the Power version for Photos libraries of up to 50GB; the Pro Power version for libraries of any size.

2. Are photos and videos exported in the original or reduced resolution?

Resolution is preserved. Photos Takeout does not alter photo quality.

3. Is metadata preserved when exporting, for both photos and videos?

Yes. Check 'Keep metadata' box to retain all the EXIF and IPTC metadata, as well as Title, Description, Location and Keywords that you've added in Photos app.

4. Does it work with M1 Silicon Macs? What if I upgrade from my old Mac to M1?

Yes, Photos Takeout works on both Intel and M1 Silicon-powered Macs. It will also work if you purchase it on your Intel Mac and later upgrade to an M1 Mac.

USING THE APP

1. I have multiple Photos libraries. How to change the system library?

Open Photos. Change the current system library to the one that you want to export from, [as explained here](#). Close Photos app, *then* launch Photos Takeout.

2. I get 'Error: Database is locked message' on launching the app.

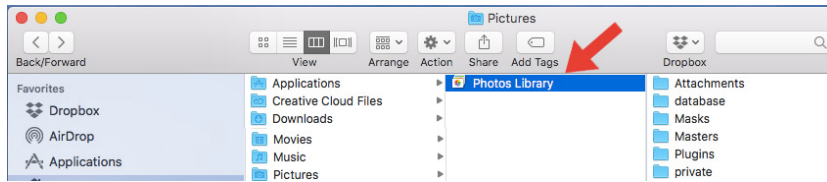
Photos and Photos Takeout shouldn't be open concurrently. Quitting Photos should resolve the issue. If you get this error even after quitting Photos, open the Activity Monitor. Select and quit Photos Agent and photolibraryd (View > Quit process).

3. There are two user accounts on my Mac. Can Photos Takeout run from both?

Yes, if Photos Takeout is installed in the *shared* Applications folder. Log in to the App Store from the other account using the Apple ID with which the app was purchased.

4. I launch the app but can't select the Photos library: On trying to select it, the 'Open' button is greyed out.

Select the library (Red arrow in the screenshot below), not the expanded folders within it. Single-click to select it, don't double-click it and don't select the folders to its right.



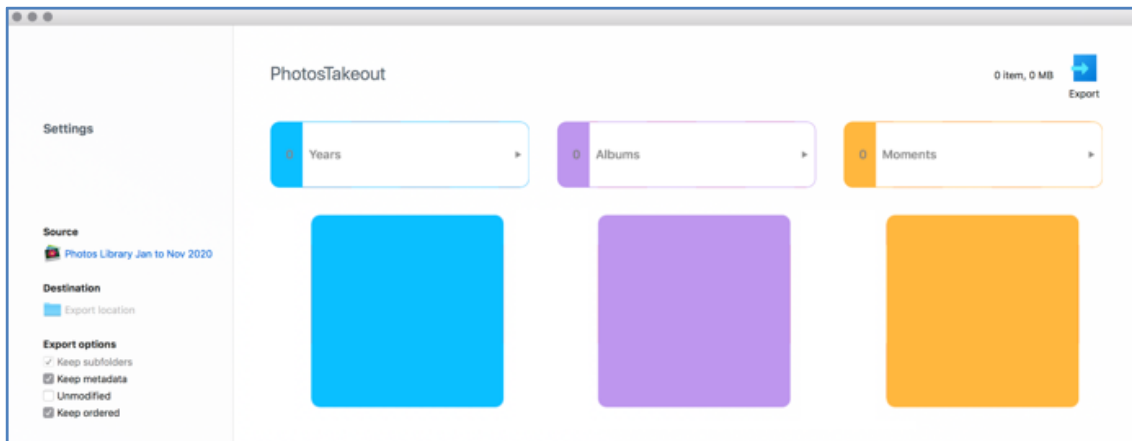
5. I can't find my Photos Library. Where is it?

Usually in the YourName/Pictures folder. If you don't see the YourName or Pictures folder, open Finder; click Go > Home > Pictures, and drag it into the Favorites.

6. On selecting Source, the spinner keeps turning for ages. Is the app hanging?

No. Depending on your library's size, it will take a few seconds to several minutes to load. A 100GB library may take 3-4 minutes to load; 1TB library 45 minutes.

7. App shows zero items in Years, Albums and Moments. Also, nothing happens when I click the Years, Albums or Moments buttons. See screenshot.



Open System Preferences > Security & Privacy > Privacy > Photos, and ensure that Photos Takeout is check marked. Further, even if Source in the left pane shows your library's name, you must click it and reselect the system library. This grants Photos Takeout access to your library.

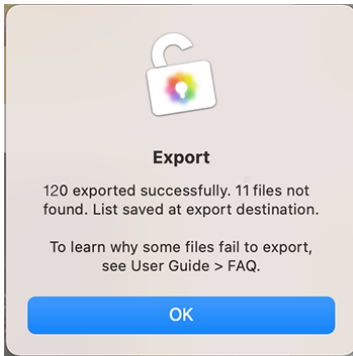
Another reason may be version mismatch, e.g. trying to use a Catalina library on a Big Sur Mac, or a Big Sur library on a Mojave Mac, or (uh) an iPhoto library on any Mac.

8. How to select multiple albums or years for export?

To select all items, Press Command-A or click Edit > Select All. To select multiple non-contiguous items, hold down the Command key and click each item. To select a range of contiguous items, click the first item, then hold down the Shift key and click the last item. Or drag with mouse to select the items within the selection rectangle.

9. Not all the items were exported. It said: "X files exported. Y not found." Why?

If you see a message like this, it can be due to a few different reasons:



- **Wrong library:** In Catalina or later, the library you set as Source **must** be the same as the Photos system library, otherwise iCloud-based and edited items won't export.
- **Photos in iCloud:** In Mojave and older, you must download the photos from iCloud before initiating export (See how, below). This is not necessary for macOS Catalina and later libraries – Photos Takeout does it for you.
- **Inability to access files:** e.g. missing referenced files, hidden photos and other odd cases. A text file of items not exported is saved, so that you can investigate.
- **No file permission:** Mostly with referenced files. See where these are located and that you haven't moved, renamed or deleted them. Contact us with the details.

10. How to download photos stored in iCloud to Photos app on my Mac?

Launch Photos, click Photos > Preferences > iCloud > select Download Originals to Mac. Once they are downloaded, use Photos Takeout to export the required folders.

Doing this is necessary only in Mojave or older mac OS.

11. I renamed some pictures in Photos app. If I right-click any photo and select Get Info, I can see both names. But after exporting, I only see one name. Why?

Apple Photos stores original file names as well as Titles. Photos Takeout keeps Titles if present, otherwise the original names. Also, if multiple photos have the same name, they'll be sequentially numbered e.g. Vacation 1.jpg, Vacation 2.jpg etc.

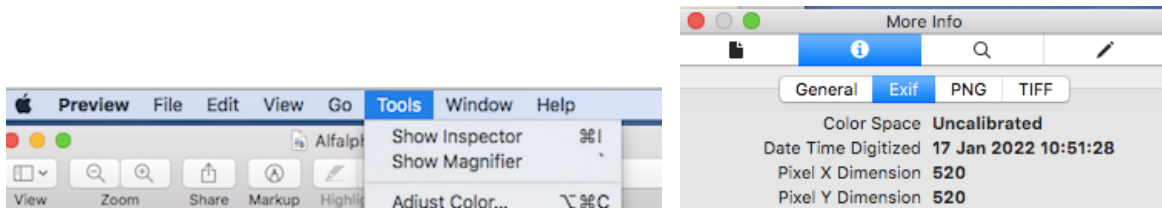
12. I exported photos to external HD but they're all zero kB and can't be opened. The error message says "File could not be opened because it is empty"

Check the EHD format (Right-click EHD icon on the desktop > Get Info). It should be APFS or Extended Journaled, not MSDOS (fat 32) or ex FAT.

To check whether EHD format or permissions are causing this problem, export a single year or album to your Mac desktop and see if it exports correctly.

13. In all my exported photos, Date Created changed to “Today”, even though I opted to keep metadata. I am checking in Mac Preview (Get Info).

Don't worry: Photos Takeout preserves all EXIF/IPTC metadata including Dates. The Creation Date shown by Preview > right-click > Get Info **isn't** the EXIF date but the file system date i.e. when it was saved to its current location. To check the EXIF date, open the photo with Preview > click Tools > Show Inspector > EXIF.



14. The formats of some of the items changed upon exporting. Why?

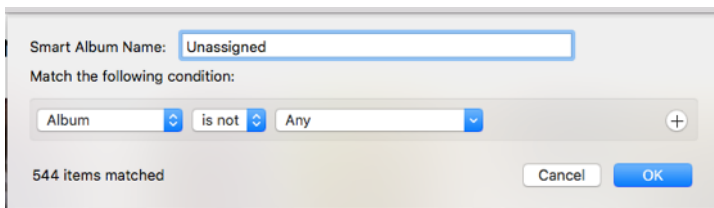
Our app exports *edited* HEIC items as JPG and *edited* MP4 files as MOV. This is consistent with how Photos does it. This doesn't happen for unmodified originals.

15. How to export shared albums or smart albums?

Save the photos from the shared or smart album as a regular album under My Albums, then you'll be able to export it just like other albums.

16. I want a complete backup. If I export all albums, that won't be complete because photos not assigned to any album will be left out. What to do?

In Photos app, click File > New Smart Album, and use the following settings to create a smart album of all unassigned photos. Then convert it to a regular album and export:



17. How does Photos Takeout handle export of raw images?

Raw photos may have been imported into Photos as raw-only or raw-jpeg pairs. For both cases, Photos Takeout exports according to the following rule:

Unmodified check-marked: Only the unedited original RAW file will be exported.

Unmodified unchecked: Only the latest edited JPG version will be exported.

18. My current system library on Mac syncs with iCloud. I also have a library on EHD that's too big for Mac or iCloud. If I set this as my system library for using with Photos Takeout, won't it start uploading to iCloud?

No need to upload the photos to iCloud – or even to Mac. Use the following workflow:

- Temporarily disconnect the Mac from iCloud. [See how](#).
- Connect EHD to Mac. In Photos Preferences, make the EHD library the system library.
- Launch Photos Takeout and export whatever you want
- Reverse Step 2 (Disconnect EHD; revert to normal Photos and iCloud settings).

19. My photos are in iCloud (Photos > Preferences > iCloud > Optimize storage is checked). If I export all years or all albums, will the photos be downloaded to Mac before export? What if there isn't enough free disk space on the Mac?

On Catalina and later, Photos Takeout fetches the items to be exported from iCloud. On Mojave and older, you must first download them into the Photos library and then export. If your Mac doesn't have enough free space, move your Photos library to an EHD ([See how](#)), set this library as the system library (in Photos > Preferences), delete the original library from the Mac, then export. This will download items from iCloud to the library on EHD instead of Mac.

20. The progress indicator is stuck at X% and the app seems to be hanging.

Photos in iCloud are downloaded to the Mac Photos library and then exported – so your Mac must have enough free disk space. Also, downloads from iCloud can take long if you have a lot of files. In rare cases, the progress indicator may run ahead and wait for exports to catch up. Please wait for the process to finish.

21. In my Photos Preferences, "Copy items to the Photos library" is unchecked, i.e. photos are stored as referenced files. These failed to export.

In Big Sur and later, you need to give Photos Takeout full disk access. Quit Photos Takeout. Open System Preferences > Security & Privacy > Privacy > in Left pane, select Full Disk Access > In Right pane, click (+) and add Photos Takeout to the list and check mark it > Reboot the Mac. Now the referenced files will be exported.

22. Face recognition information is not exported as part of metadata?

Face recognition information is not part of EXIF or IPTC metadata, but you can add the names of people in photos in the IPTC keywords field. To do this, go to **People** view in Photos > click on a face > the photos containing that face will be displayed > Select all > right click, Get Info > add the person's name in keywords.

23. How to export incrementally, i.e. only the photos added or edited since the last time I exported my library?

This feature is currently under development and we expect to release it soon.

24. My Live Photos were exported as JPG/HEIF. What about the video?

Live Photos are a photo/video combo that works only in the Apple ecosystem. Photos Takeout exports the photo component. We plan to add the option to export the MOV component, thus exporting two files (JPG/HEIC + MOV) for each Live Photo.

OTHER

1. How to export only selected photos or videos (not folders)?

Do it from Photos app, not Photos Takeout. Select the items and either drag and drop in your desired location or (for more options) click File > Export.

2. Does Photos Takeout work with iPhoto or Aperture libraries?

No, Photos Takeout is only meant for Photos app. Not iPhoto or Aperture. Convert those libraries to Photos, then export with Photos Takeout.

3. Can I open a Photos library fetched from a Mac running Mojave with Photos Takeout on a Mac running a newer version of macOS?

No, you can only use a Photos Library that can be opened with Photos on that Mac. To use a Mojave library on a Monterey Mac, first import it into Photos for Monterey. Note that you can't downgrade a newer version of Photos library to an older version.

4. My question isn't answered here.

Please email us via the app, explaining the issue and stating your macOS version, how many items in your library, size of the library (GB), library location (on Mac or EHD), location of photos (locally in Mac Photos, iCloud or referenced); and the export destination (Mac, EHD, NAS, cloud storage etc.) The more information you provide, the faster we'll be able to analyze and troubleshoot the issue.

This FAQ document is expanded frequently by incorporating the latest questions asked by users, so we encourage you to review it from time to time.

KNOWN ISSUES

1. Some features may not work in macOS Mojave and older. The app will work for old OS's, but with limitations. For example, photos and videos saved in iCloud must be downloaded to the local library before export, and keywords are not exported.
2. Metadata added to videos via the Photos app is not retained upon export (Note that this also happens on exporting with Photos app – Date & Time original are retained only when you exported unedited originals, not in edited videos).

3. When exporting the folder-subfolder-albums hierarchy (with 'Keep folders' check marked), the albums and folders must have distinct names. If an album has the same name as its parent folder, photos will be saved in the parent folder.
4. On clicking the 'Cancel export' button, the progress indicator stops but exports don't. We will resolve this bug soon, but in the meantime, please quit the app to abort.
5. The current file naming convention is as explained earlier in this document. We plan to add more flexibility in how exported files are named, e.g. YYYY-MM-DD prefix.

Please follow [our Facebook page](#) for the latest on app features, enhancements, bug and known issues (and workarounds) etc.

